

Of Sickness, Soup, and Sisters by the-singular-peep

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Summary: All she wanted to do was make her sister feel better, and all she had done was make a mess. All she ever did was make messes. But that was okay, because now she had a family. And with family, it was okay to make messes. [ONE-SHOT. COMPLETE. AU. SARA IS ALIVE AU. SARA AND EL ARE SIBLINGS AU. FOUND FAMILY FEELS. RATED K PLUS FOR BLEEPED OUT SWEARING. SARA ISN'T A CHARACTER OPTION?]

Of Sickness, Soup, and Sisters

A/N: I figured it up, and if I'm right, Sara's about three to four years older than El. That means that if she was still alive, El would have a big sister. A *nice* big sister. Don't ask me how this works. I just wanted a fluffy little AU story with them. Comment if you want more, or with anything you'd like! Thanks again!

Of Sickness, Soup, and Sisters

El was getting impatient.

She had put the toast in *ages* ago - there was no way it wasn't done yet. And yet, it had not yet popped up. She sunk a little to the ground, getting at eye level with the counter and watching the toaster. Any minute now...

It startled her when it popper up, and she fell back hard onto her bottom. She eagerly stood up and moved to the toaster, but frowned when she saw the bread. Burnt.

Like always.

Huffing, Eleven yanked the toast from the toaster with her mind and threw them into the garbage with her other three tries. Toast making just wasn't her thing. Maybe she should stick to Eggos. Just as she was about to try *one last time*, she heard the special knock and looked away from the of the most-of-the-way gone loaf of bread. Hop was home early!

Eleven grinned and threw the locks open with her mind and started to run to the door, but stopped short when she realized that she left the loaf of bread open. She carefully took a moment to tie up the end, doing it with her fingers instead of her mind because Hopper said to. Before she could finish, she heard a voice.

"Daddy?" It said. It sounded soft, and a little scared, and El recognized it instantly. It wasn't Hopper - it was Sara.

Eleven peeked her head around the threshold carefully, her short curls bouncing around her ears. Sara shouldn't be home, not yet. School let out at 3-0-0, and (Eleven had checked), it was only 1-1-6. She carefully took in her housemate's appearance - the flush of her cheeks, the cloudiness of her eyes, the disheveled look of her outfit. Eleven had only known Sara for a little while - a little less than the time she had known Hopper - but she knew that she didn't normally look like *that*.

She walked around the corner slowly, her hands twisting in the hem of her shirt. Sara didn't look very well, and Eleven was concerned.

"Ah." Eleven said simply, not remembering how to make words because she was a little frightened. Sara looked up instantly, and her face softened.

"Hi, El. Is dad home?" She asked. Eleven shook her head.

"Hop is work." She said, and then she pointed at Sara's face. "All good?"

Sara shrugged, but still smiled at her younger housemate.

"I'm alright. Just a little sick is all."

Eleven cocked her head.

"Sick?" She asked, because she honestly didn't recall the word. She had been with Hopper for eight months now, but she still wasn't very good with words. Sara nodded.

"Yeah, sick. I've been sick a lot since..." Sara looked down. "Since I was little. Since I got sick that first time."

Eleven knew the story. She knew how Sara had contracted *cancer* and had almost *died* when she was nine years old. She knew that her mother had told Hopper it was his fault, and that she had won custody after Sara almost died. She knew Hopper didn't even know if Sara was still alive, after that, because he was never allowed to see her, and that was because during her years with *cancer* he had started drinking and had once hit Sara's mother. Eleven knew Hopper didn't drink anymore because of that, or at least hadn't since he had taken

her in eight months ago, in December. Three months ago - it had been May at the time, Eleven knew, because months were something she was good at - Sara had showed up at Hopper's station. Hopper had come home late that night because of it, because he was talking to Sara and crying and making phone calls and doing paperwork, but Eleven hadn't known that and so she had curled up in her bedroom and cried and cried, because she was sure Hopper was never coming home for her again.

When Hopper came home at midnight with another little girl, one older than Eleven and taller and better behaved, with blonde hair and blue eyes and the kind of sad smile that matched Hopper's perfectly, Eleven had gotten scared and hid in the woods for a week, because she was very good at hiding. To her surprise, Hopper and this new girl had found her, and brought her back home. She had stayed silent for another three days after that, and skittish, because she was sure that she would mess it up and that Hopper didn't want her any more. But on the fourth day, Hopper had sent the new girl out, and had sat down with Eleven.

"You're both my girls now," He had said, reaching over and brushing a curl from her face. Eleven looked at his chest instead of his face. "I would never, ever let one of you replace the other. You got that? I love you just as much, kid, and just because Sara came home doesn't mean you aren't home, too."

And from then on, Eleven and Sara had been sisters. Sara's mother had been in a nasty marriage for the past few years, and it had finally landed her in the same state Hopper had been in years ago - an alcoholic. Hopper gained full custody. Sara was home to stay.

She was older - Three years older than Eleven was, and so currently that meant she was nearing fifteen years old compared to El's eleven-almost-twelve, and was a sophomore at the local highschool (Something Eleven envied, because it wasn't fair that Sara could go to school when she couldn't even leave the house, but she supposed it was alright because at least she wasn't alone *all* the time anymore).

Being a sophomore in highschool, El was not sure why she was at home at 1-1-6 on a Tuesday.

"Sick?" She asked again, because the meaning was on the tip of her tongue but she still couldn't get it.

"Sick. Like..." Sara thought a moment before continuing. "When you don't feel well, and you cough and sneeze and run a fever. They sent me home from fifth period because I was running a fever."

Eleven's eyes lit up, because she *did* know that word after all - She had been sick before. She had been sick a *lot* before, and Hopper said it was because her *immune system* was *crappy* from being isolated her whole life. She didn't know what that meant. However, she did know that it meant sometimes she woke up hot but cold at the same time with snot in her nose and cramps in her tummy. She didn't like to think that Sara felt like that, too, and so she went up to her and frowned.

"Sorry." Eleven said, and she patted Sara's arm. Sara smiled down at her, but she looked out of breath. Hopper said Sara was a sickly girl, and Eleven guessed that meant she got sick a lot, too. She didn't like that. She took a step back and scrunched up her face, thinking. Maybe she could help Sara feel better.

"Eggos?" She finally suggested. Even if she couldn't make toast, she knew for a fact she could make Eggos *perfectly*. Sara laughed with a little wheeze, but shook her head.

"I think I'll pass, El." She said, and El frowned. Eggos were supposed to make *everyone* feel better. "I'm going to go lay down in Dad's room." Sara said tiredly. She set her bookbag down and walked towards the larger room, but stopped halfway. "If he comes home, tell him where I am, please."

And then Eleven was alone in the living room again, and she wasn't sure how she felt about that.

It was 3-2-5 when the nagging sensation in the back of her head to do something for her sister got the best of her. Eleven turned the TV off with her mind, not caring that she was leaving in the middle of a new episode of *As The World Turns*, and stood up. What could she *do*? She paced a little in the living room, her face scrunched up as she

thought.

Sara had refused Eggos, but maybe she'd like toast. Toast was a sick-people food, Eleven had learned, both from TV and experience. Toast and soup and that clear drink with bubbles in it.

And so, she would make toast. She would make toast for her sick big sister if it was the last thing she did.

Eleven decided the first step was to make sure she was prepared in every way possible so she wouldn't mess this up. She pinned back her hair, using every bow and clip and pin from the bathroom vanity, so it wouldn't hang in her face even the slightest bit. She changed out of pajamas into a pair of old jeans and a t-shirt, because maybe if she looked grown up she could cook like she was grown up, too. She washed her hands for thirty whole seconds in hot water to make sure they were clean. She tied an apron around her waist and got out her ingredients:

Two pieces of bread, for the toast.

A can of Campbell's, for the soup.

A glass, to fill with that bubbly clear drink.

A big plate, to put the toast on.

A bowl, for the soup.

A canopener, also for the soup.

She thought long and hard if there was anything she was missing, and after five long minutes, decided she was ready to begin. She would start with the soup, because she thought it would probably be the easiest. She had watched Hopper do it a hundred times, and he never seemed to have a problem. She would put a pot on the stove, turn the heat on a little, pour in the can of soup, and let it heat up. No problem.

She put the pot on the stove, but thought a minute before turning the stove top on. She technically was *not, under any circumstances*, allowed to use the stove when she was there alone.

But... Technically, she wasn't alone. Sara was here. She was cooped up in Hopper's room, probably asleep, but she was here, and so Eleven reasoned that that meant she wasn't alone and could use the stove. As long as she was careful. She turned on the eye and positioned the pot accordingly.

Next she had to open the can, which proved to be a problem in itself. No one told her that canopeners were this difficult. Five minutes later, she threw the canopener to the ground and broke the metal top off with her mind. A little bit of blood dripped from her nose into the soup, but she figured Sara wouldn't mind. They were family, after all, and family didn't care about a little blood.

She dumped the contents of the can into the pot and watched it closely. After a few minutes, nothing had happened.

After a few more minutes, nothing had happened either. Eleven supposed maybe the heat wasn't up high enough, so she turned it up. Then she turned it up a little more, just for good measure. And then she watched again, and this time in a few minutes she got bored, so she decided to move on to something else while she waited.

The dreaded toast.

She started by carefully lowering the bread into the toaster. She knew she had to get it right this time, because they were the last two pieces that weren't end pieces, and she knew no one liked end pieces. She would put the toast in, fix Sara's drink while it was in, pop it out, pour the soup into a bowl, and then she'd be all set to surprise her sister.

After pushing the bread down, Eleven was sure to keep a close eye on it while preparing the drink. She opened the fridge, but she didn't see anything clear or bubbly. There was orange juice, milk, chocolate milk, apple juice, and the weird canned drinks Hopper says she's not allowed to have, but that's it. Eleven thought a minute, and decided there was only one option: She'd have to make a clear drink bubble.

The only clear drink she knew of was water, and so that's what she would have to do. Bubbly water and whatever they drank on TV couldn't be that different, right? Not if they looked the same. And so

she filled the drink with water from the tap, got out a straw and stuck it in, and blew. She learned this trick early on, because she was having a Grumpy Day and Hopper had wanted her to laugh, and so he had made her juice bubbly. She had laughed, and then tried it herself, and soon they were both laughing because she accidentally bubbled it right out of the cup.

She smiled at the memory. Then it had been only the two of them, and she was his only family. But that didn't mean now was bad, because now she had a sister - more *family*, someone pretty to look up to like Mike had at his house. And that wasn't bad.

She blew into the drink because she was going to make her new sister a good lunch to help her feel better, but the bubbles didn't stay. She frowned. The bubbly drinks on TV were always bubbly, and not only for a little while. She tried again. It went away just as fast. What else could she do?

By the fourth try, she smelled something a little funny. She looked up, and noticed... smoke. From the toaster. She dropped the glass in her surprise, and it shattered, but she could hardly care because she had burnt the toast *again*. She popped the toast up with her mind and lay them on the plate, frowning at the blackened bread. It did not look as appetizing as she had hoped, but maybe it would do, even if there was still smoke coming from the toaster and there was water all over the floor. It would still be okay - she would at least have her soup.

And then she remembered her soup, remembered how long it had been cooking, and hurried to remove it. She carefully stepped over the mess on the floor and reached for the pot - and instantly burnt her hands. She shrieked at the sudden pain in her hands, and looked at them in shock. They were red now, but that was the least of her problems because after burning her hands she was close enough to smell the soup.

Close enough to smell that it was scorched. Without even thinking, she pulled the pot off the eye with her mind, but it slipped. Soup went *everywhere*.

Hot soup went everywhere. Eleven yelped again and scrambled on

top of the counter, because that was a very loud and scary clang the pot made, and that soup smelled very bad and was very hot on the ground, and she did not wish to become covered in it.

Eleven sat, perched on the counter, breath heavy, and looked around.

She looked at the broken glass on the floor. She looked at the black toast on the counter. She looked at the canopener on the floor. She looked at the pot lying next to it on the floor, and at the browned soup splattering the floor and sending hot steam up into the air. She shakily reached over to turn off the stove, and then she started to cry.

All she wanted to do was make her sister feel better, and all she had done was make a mess. All she ever did was make messes.

She wasn't sure how long it had been, but eventually, she heard a voice.

"El, I heard you scream, is everything oka-" Sara's voice trailed off, and El looked up. Sara was standing in the living room, at the threshold of the kitchen, and her wide, sick eyes were taking in the mess. *All* of it. And then Eleven's face crumpled, and she started to cry again, and this time she tried to hide, too. She would be in trouble. She had used the stove without permission, had hurt herself, and had made a mess. She would be in *big* trouble. She crawled into the corner where the counter met the wall and pulled her knees up to her chest.

"Sorry, sorry, sorry," She sobbed into her hands that were covering her entire face. "Wanted to help, sorry, sorry,"

The room was silent, and it wasn't long before Eleven felt arms wrap themselves around her thin back, and hands start to pet up and down her shirt.

"Shh, it's okay, it's okay..." Sara soothed, and when Eleven looked up, her face was filled with nothing but kindness. "But let's clean up before dad gets home."

Hopper didn't *mean* to stay late that night, he really didn't. But he

had, and now it was ten o'clock at night and he was just now pulling into his house. Eleven would be so upset with him, and he was sure Sara would be, too. He frowned as he came up to the door. What kind of idiot would pick finishing a loose-end case with good ol' Florence instead of coming home to spend quality time with his two beautiful daughters?

Him, apparently, because that's exactly what he had done. He knocked the special knock and got no response. Great. They were mad. He tried again, and this time shouted in to them, too.

"Hey, girls?" He called, careful to sound remorseful, because he was. "I'm sorry I'm late. I should have called."

Still, no response. He tried again.

"Kids, let me in. You can lecture me all you want, but I need in there, okay?"

He was about to try knocking again when he heard footsteps, and then heard the unlocking of all five different locks. The door swung open and he was greeted by his oldest, wrapped in a blanket and looking disheveled.

"Hi, daddy," She whispered, and Hopper grimaced to hear that her voice was hoarse. He stepped in and shut the door before wrapping Sara in a hug. Three months still wasn't enough to be used to seeing her again every day.

"You okay, baby girl?" He asked, pulling away and cupping her face. He put a hand to her forehead, and she pulled away. Smiled, even.

"I'm fine, dad. I just got sent home sick from school, but it's nothing bad. Just a cold." She smiled and ducked her head a little. "I think I scared El. She tried to... help."

And then she giggled, and Hopper didn't know why. Sara gestured to the couch with her head, and Hopper followed her gesture to see Eleven curled up on the couch under a similar blanket to Sarah's, a microwavable bowl of macaroni halfway eaten in front of her and another on the coffee table.

"We cleaned it up and had some dinner, and she fell asleep beside me on the couch."

Hopper looked from one daughter to another, then put his hand to Sarah's cheeks again.

"You're burning up, girlie. Go get in bed. I'll take care of El."

Sara smiled at him, and started to move to the bathroom to brush her teeth before she heard her father wince. She turned to him.

He had sat down on the couch, and his hand was on Eleven's forehead where she slept. He looked up to Sara.

"Looks like you shared your plague." He laughed. Sara shrugged.

"Oh well. Looks like you'll just have to stay home and take care of us tomorrow." She smiled, turning to go brush her teeth. Hopper sighed, and picked Eleven up even though he was hoping to avoid that. He stopped at the wall between his room and the girls', and thought a moment.

"Come on to my room when you're done, sweetheart. I'll be dam*ed if I let you two out of my sight again like this."

The next morning, Hopper woke up to a bed full of sick little girls and a headcold, and he couldn't have been happier.